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DEPT FOR EUR/CARC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/27/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [IR](#) [AM](#)
SUBJECT: YEZIDI PROTEST AT EMBASSY

REF: A) 07 YEREVAN 274 B) 06 YEREVAN 1484

Classified By: Poloff Masha Herbst for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (S) About 15 Yezidis protested in front of the Embassy April 27, carrying Armenian-language signs that read "Stop the genocide of Yezidis" and "23 killed in Mosul." They were protesting the deaths of 23 Yezidi workers who were shot in Mosul, Iraq, on April 22. The protest was the first in recent memory that was organized by Yezidis, as opposed to the Kongra-Gel/KGK (reftel), and was significantly less robust than those orchestrated by the Kurdish group. Embassy officers met with two representatives of the protesters: the self-appointed "leader of all Yezidis worldwide" Aziz Tamoyan, and Tayar Musafryan, a self-identified a Yezidi religious leader. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Tamoyan and Musafryan told us they had spoken by phone with Yezidis in Iraq, who told them that the gunmen who had killed the Yezidi workers were Kurds. The Armenian Yezidis expressed their concern for the safety of the Yezidis in Iraq, who they say are under constant threat of attack by the Kurds, without any guarantee of safety from either coalition forces or the Iraqi government.

¶3. (S) We took the opportunity to ask Tamoyan and Musafryan about whether there was any friction between Kurds and Yezidis in Armenia. They said there are very few Kurds here, but confirmed that the KGK was active in Armenia. Tamoyan told us that, in addition to the PKK office in Yerevan, there was one in the Kurdish village of Alagyaz, which is about an hour from the capital. (NOTE: The Yezidi are closely related to Kurds; the main difference between the two cultures is religious. While most Kurds are Muslim, the Yezidi practice a distinct religion, rooted in Zoroastrianism, which forbids eating lettuce and wearing the color blue. Some Armenian Yezidi, including the fiercely nationalistic Tamoyan, refuse to acknowledge that they speak Kurmanji, or Northern Kurdish, insisting instead that they speak "Yezidiki," which they say is a separate language. END NOTE.)

¶4. (S) COMMENT: This protest was unique, in that it was the first in recent memory that was organized by Yezidis, as opposed to the KGK (reftels). The fact that the organizers could only muster 15 demonstrators, however, speaks to the fractiousness of the community. The KGK's reported practice of paying Yezidis a few dollars and bussing them in from the villages to protest for Abdullah Ocalan's release tends to be more effective; over 150 people participated in the last such demonstration (ref A).

